

# A PAIR OF FISH FOR THE BRIDE, PLEASE!

## A look at the wedding tradition of exchanging fish

Traditions and rituals hold special places on cheerful occasions like weddings. Embedded in the culture and tradition of the place of origin, it is never a bad idea to dig deeper and unearth the significance of such rituals that have stood the test of time and stayed with us. Fish and its role in Bengali wedding rituals is one such association.

Wearing a red shirt paired with green chequered lungi, and a sweet paan in his mouth, he tows along affectionately behind his beloved. She, who is in a red sari with a sequin border and a dangling nose ring, timidly enters the house in a palanquin. This beautiful pair, undoubtedly of Rui fish origin, is playing the part of an intrinsic Bengali wedding ritual; the gifting of fish to the bride by the groom on their holud ceremony. Smearing raw turmeric paste on the would-be couple is an age-old tradition and so is the ceremony of giving fish.

This special gift signifies good luck and prosperity, a way of extending best wishes for the bride's happiness as she embarks upon a new beginning.

In Hindu weddings, the bride's wedding sari is wrapped in a way that resembles a fish. Similarly, sweets are also decorated in the form of a fish when they are sent as gifts to either household. One of the first rituals a Hindu bride takes as she steps into her new household is to appreciate an array of decorated fish. Fish holds immense significance in a Bengali household, and

simply looking at the fish is said to mark her auspicious start in the new household.

The best fish and the biggest catch of the day are sorted from the bazaar, and then the pair dressed as a bride and groom and sent to the bride's house in the hope that they would serve the fish in the evening when the groom's family comes over for the holud rituals.

In the olden days, people stuffed Tk 500 notes in the fish so that whoever cuts the fish would get a reward. The fish was then fried and served to the guest along with 'deshi pithas' and 'pulis.' Nowadays, it is the

same except simple fried fish is no longer the fancied item on the menu. The recipe

has changed and tilted towards the uncommon and tastier versions. Most families are in the race to make the menu as diverse as possible.

As the wedding season is upon us, *Star Lifestyle* is featuring a few great fish recipes to try this season. Flip to Page 8 and try some of Salina Parvin's mouth-watering recipes.

— RBR

**Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed and LS Archive  
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